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## CANADA

# Here are the COVID-19 questions to ask before you let your kids visit their grandparents

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As provinces move to relax [coronavirus](#) restrictions and allow people to slowly expand their “social bubbles,” it is raising a question for those with young children: Does that mean it’s safe to go visit grandma and grandpa?

Because each family situation is different, provincial officials say it’s going to be up to each household to assess the risks on their own.

“If you have an elderly mother or father and their health isn’t great, I wouldn’t chance it,” Ontario Premier Doug Ford told reporters during a Monday briefing.

In B.C., Dr. Bonnie Henry, the provincial health officer, echoed that sentiment last week, saying that while the province will soon allow people to expand their social circles a bit, they will have to give careful thought as to whether those circles include people at greater risk of illness, such as the elderly.

Two experts consulted by the Star on Monday said there are a few key questions parents should ask themselves before piling in the car to go see the grandparents.

Seniors are already more prone to getting infections, said Dr. Roger Wong, a clinical professor in geriatric medicine at the University of British Columbia. Do they have any long-standing health conditions, such as heart disease, lung disease or diabetes, that could make them even more vulnerable?

Dr. Stephen Freedman, a professor of pediatrics at the University of Calgary, says another question to ask is: What sort of exposure have you and your kids had with individuals outside the household? Has anyone in the household had any symptoms in the preceding 14 days?

“The greater the number of exposures and interactions outside the home, the greater the risk,” he said.

Freedman noted that children are more likely to be asymptomatic and thus less likely to be coughing and sneezing. They are also less hygienic than adults. That said, there are still no reliable scientific models to know the potential for children to transmit the coronavirus compared to adults.

Something else parents will want to consider is how long the visit with the grandparents will be and what type of interactions they’ll have.

“The longer and closer the interaction, the greater the potential for contamination,” Freedman said.

Meeting grandparents in an open space is preferred to an enclosed space, Wong agreed. And before allowing your child to go in for a hug, you should ask: “What social bubble have they been in” over the last 14 days?

Wong adds that if the grandparents live in a residence where there are other seniors, that might also be another reason to take pause.

The Star spoke to two Vancouver parents Monday who have heard the recommendations from experts and have decided to take different approaches.

Ali Liu, a physician, said she and her young family plan to keep practising physical distancing from her parents for the foreseeable future.

She said she and her husband have remained housebound for the most part during the pandemic, except when they take their toddler for walks.

When they have gone to visit her parents, they have remained in the driveway. Though they do get out of their car and have even had meals there, Liu says they've always maintained a separation of more than two metres.

Following the upcoming Victoria Day long weekend, Liu said her husband, also a physician, plans to return to work, which means greater exposure to the outside community.

Going forward, they plan to "tighten the bubble" and make fewer trips to see her parents. And if they do visit, they plan to remain on the other side of the gate.

"It's been very challenging but I think it's a necessity for public safety," Liu said. "It's a small sacrifice, albeit a hard one."

Alfred Chien, on the other hand, says he and his wife have allowed their six-year-old daughter to go visit his parents once a week.

Chien said during this pandemic, he has remained at home, except to go shopping for groceries once a week. His six-year-old daughter doesn't leave the house except to play in the backyard. His wife works at a bank, so she doesn't join them on their visits to his parents' house.

He acknowledges that his wife could bring the virus home to the rest of the family. But after a family discussion, they felt the risk was minimal.

Chien said he closely monitored the SARS outbreak in his native Hong Kong back in the early 2000s and knows early protection is key. He feels his family has taken appropriate steps to mitigate risk of exposure by wearing masks and frequently washing hands.

When he and his daughter are at his parents house, he says his sister also brings her children over.

"My parents are happy to see them screaming and running around," he said.

"I truly believe mental health is a very important factor to your health."



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